

Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District  
Omaha Quartermaster Depot  
(General Storehouse Building No. 21)  
22nd and Woolworth Sts.  
Omaha  
Douglas County  
Nebraska

HABS No. NE-40-A

HABS  
NEB,  
28-OMAH  
2A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
NEB,  
28-OMAH  
2A-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District  
Omaha Quartermaster Depot  
(General Storehouse Building No. 21)

HABS No. NE-40-A

Location: The Omaha Quartermaster Depot is located within the Omaha Quartermaster Historical District, an irregular site bounded by Hickory Street, 22nd Street, Woolworth Avenue, 20th Street, and the northwesterly line of the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way in Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.

Present Owner: Department of the Army, United States of America

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance: The Omaha Quartermaster Depot has gained its significance by being associated with, and a part of, the Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historical District (listed as an Historic District by the National Register of Historic Places in 1978). The Quartermaster Depot, historically known as the "Old Corral", played a significant part in late nineteenth and early twentieth century local and regional history, and today remains as a remarkably cohesive example of the changing role played by the military and railroad in the development and "westward expansion" following the Civil War.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

Date of Erection: There is conflicting information concerning the date of construction of Building No. 21. The National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form<sup>1</sup> places a construction date of 1890 to Building No. 21, while Lavish<sup>2</sup> cites a construction date of 1904 at a cost of \$75,000. This later information is confirmed by an article in the 1905 Yearly Review Issue of the Omaha Bee:<sup>3</sup>

"An immense amount of money has been spent on schools, clubs, and all kinds of public buildings during the years 1904 and 1905. By far the greatest contributor is the United States Government. Counting aside, the \$75,000 brick warehouse at Twenty-second and Woolworth Streets, built in 1904 by M. Keefe on plans drawn by W. T. Misener..."

The 1904 construction date is also verified by a blueprint dated 1 June, 1903, showing the proposed 60' x 350' warehouse in a dashed line where Building No. 21 exists today.

Architect/Builder: Building No. 21 was constructed in 1904 from drawings prepared by Architect Walter T. Misener.<sup>4</sup> Walter T. Misener's architectural practice began in Omaha in 1899 and lasted until 1909, at which time he joined

with architect William E. Stockham.<sup>5</sup> Misener left this architectural practice in June of 1912 to become Chief Building Inspector for the City of Omaha. In a freak accident on 26 July, 1912, Misener fell and died suddenly from a "stroke of apoplexy".<sup>6</sup> Nothing is known about the building's contractor, M. Keefe. City directories of this period do not list anyone by this name living in Omaha or South Omaha.

Original and

Subsequent Owners: On 9 August, 1879, land along the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way was deeded to the United States by Susannah McPherson and other heirs of the Jacob S. Schull estate. A quit-claim deed was executed by Augustus Kountze and others on 1 September of the same year to perfect title to the tract of about 4.9 acres. Title was approved by the Attorney General on 28 November, 1879, and recorded in Book 50 of Deeds, pages 162 and 163 of Douglas County Records. In 1903, additional land along the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way was acquired from Mary A. Elliot and Albert Hartstuff, bringing the total area to 7 acres. The United States Government has been the sole owner of this property to date.<sup>7</sup>

B. Historical Context

Omaha, Nebraska has been the site of supply and service depots since 1866. In this year, the first "government corral" supply depot was established on land owned by the Union Pacific Railroad located near the

Missouri River. This depot supplied the troops of the Department of the Platte for thirteen years. As many as five steamboats a day docked on the shores of the Missouri River with supplies for the depot.<sup>8</sup> With the increase in Indian resistance in the west and the additional soldiers required to fulfill the task, the depot was declared inadequate in 1878 to handle the necessary supply quantities. The current site of the depot was chosen and purchased adjoining the Union Pacific Railroad.<sup>9</sup>

In 1879, the present site of the Quartermaster Depot was chosen and purchased from the heirs of Jacob S. Schull. The new depot was located between 20th and 22nd Streets, south of Woolworth Avenue to the Union Pacific right-of-way.

By 31 March, 1882, seventeen buildings had been constructed at the new Quartermaster Depot, several of them in brick.<sup>10</sup> Two of these original brick buildings still exist today, and are known as Building No. 1\* (a two-story office building with two one-story office wings) and Building No. 3 (blacksmith, wheelwright, and carpenter shops).

The Omaha Quartermaster Depot was the principal supply depot for the Department of the Platte. Its customers included Forts Laramie, Douglas, Bridger, McKinney, Niobrara, Robinson, Russell, Sidney, Washakie,

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\*A note on the numbering of buildings. The numbers used in referring to buildings in the Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District are taken from the U. S. Army's numbering of buildings. There are numbers in the sequence which are missing, indicating that the structures have been removed.

Montezuma Creek, and Pilot Buttes.<sup>11</sup> The Quartermaster Depot continued to supply the Department of the Platte until the Department was disbanded in 1898. Additional brick warehouses were built, replacing less sound wood buildings. Building No. 20 was constructed in 1894 and Building No. 21 in 1904.<sup>12</sup>

At the turn of the century, records indicate that there was an effort to build more general storehouses at depots across the country because of the unpreparedness, and resulting supply shortages, encountered during the Spanish-American War.<sup>13</sup> Building No. 21 was evidently a manifestation of this effort. \$75,000 in funds were then appropriated by Congress for the construction of a storehouse at the Omaha Quartermaster Depot in 1902. Prior to any construction, an extra parcel of land adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way was acquired, and two older wood structures were moved. The design of Building No. 21 was patterned after Building No. 20, and was intended to be a three-story structure. However, due to the extra expenses of land acquisition, the design was modified to a two-story structure.<sup>14</sup>

The Quartermaster Depot fell into a period of low activity until the outbreak of the "Great War" in 1917. During World War I, activity at the Depot peaked. Some 150,000 troops at Camp Funston, Fort Leavenworth, Fort Des Moines, and the National Guard of Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota were supported by the Omaha Quartermaster Depot. In 1918, Building No. 24 was constructed to help increase the capacity of the Depot.<sup>15</sup>

Another period of inactivity soon followed the end of World War I. In March of 1927, and again in 1932, the Depot was declared surplus and

listed for sale. No acceptable offers were made, though, and the government retained the title.

With the Great Depression and resulting New Deal programs of the first Roosevelt administration, a new source of activity came to the Quartermaster Depot. Building No. 21 became home to many homeless transients. Later in the '30's, it housed supplies and equipment brought in from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)<sup>16</sup> of Nebraska and stored miscellaneous army supplies. On 26 November, 1937, a three alarm fire struck Building No. 21. The fire, discovered in the north end of the building at 4:14 a.m., traveled about half the length of the building before being checked by firemen.<sup>17</sup> A portion of the fire wall in the attic between the north and center section had to be replaced as a result.

In 1938, the Work Projects Administration (WPA) allotments were approved and were used to put the Depot back in sound condition. Buildings No. 1 and 18 were renovated, a new garage (Building No. 5) was built, and the entire Depot received a general "face lifting", including landscaping. Soon the Depot was acting as the supply base for 34 CCC camps in Nebraska, Kansas, and South Dakota.<sup>18</sup>

World War II brought military activities to the Quartermaster Depot once again. It supplied recruiting depots, served as an ordnance school for officers, and acted as an automotive training center. By the end of the War, Building No. 18 - modified once again - held Italian Prisoners of War.<sup>19</sup>

Following World War II, the Depot began serving as a base for the Nebraska National Guard - Omaha Garrison, and for units of the Organized Reserve Corps (ORC). On 31 January, 1968, the Depot became home for the 561st Support Group, which is still the present occupant.

On 13 February, 1982, another fire, reported to have been started by transients, occurred in Building No. 21. This one proved to be fatal to the structure. The northern two-thirds of the building were destroyed, leaving only exterior brick walls and chimneys standing.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement of Character and Condition:

General Storehouse Building No. 21, a two-story warehouse with full basement, is characterized by its linear form, its three-part composition, and by its heavy timber and brick bearing wall construction. Building No. 21 is a utilitarian structure, formally inspired by two preceding warehouse structures at the Quartermaster Depot - Building No. 1 (1880) and Building No. 20 (1894).

Much of their Italianate and Classical detailing, massing, and form are incorporated into the design of Building No. 21. Currently vacant, the northern two-thirds were ravaged by fire on 13 February, 1982.

### B. Detailed Description of Exterior

The 350 ft. x 60 ft. thinly-jointed brick structure rests on a raised rusticated limestone foundation. Building No. 21 is divided horizontally at the second floor level by a sandstone belt course, and is further articulated by engaged brick pilasters (second floor) and corbelled brick at the eave line. Large brick chimneys with simple inset panels spring upward from the exterior walls and are supported laterally to the roof by ornate wrought iron rods. Simple brick wall dormers, containing circular sandstone medallions in the tympanum, project upward at the building's



center and at either end, giving each elevation a simple three-part composition.

The main building facades are punctuated by shallow, arched openings containing wood double-hung windows (two lights over two). The wings flanking the central wall dormer contain six pairs of windows (second floor) with corresponding windows or large 8 ft. x 10 ft. sliding wood loading doors aligned below. The central wall dormers contain three attic windows, with two windows below at the second floor and a centered loading dock at the first floor.

Each end facade is characterized by a similar three-part composition. A central projecting wall dormer contains pairs of windows at the attic and second floor, flanked at either side by a single window and engaged brick pilasters. Windows at the first floor align with those above.

The structural system of Building No. 21 is typical of warehouses in this period. Heavy wood joists span from load bearing walls to two sets of beams - wood at the second floor, steel at the first and basement levels. Loads are then transferred to massive brick columns and footings in the basement via heavy transfer columns - 10" x 10" at the second floor, and 14" x 14" at the first.

A simple, trussed, slate-covered hip covers Building No. 21. The projecting eaves and wood soffits are embellished with horizontal beveled wood medallions and edged with built-in Ogee galvanized metal gutters.

A full-length, heavy timber loading dock was once attached to the west side of Building No. 21, but has since been removed. Regularly spaced

beam pockets in the limestone foundation give evidence of the dock's existence.

#### C. Detailed Description of Interior

All three floors (basement, first and second) of Building No. 21 are essentially the same (see Drawings, Photos 1, 2 and 3). Each floor is partitioned into three fire zones by two brick fire walls running from the basement to the roof. The central zone is approximately 100'-6" in length by the building width, and the two end zones both are 116'-4" in length by the building width. Each end zone connects to the central zone by metal fire doors and contains a large enclosed freight elevator. Simple wood stairs clad in a wood and metal fire enclosure are positioned next to the brick fire walls in each end bay.

Typical flooring consists of 2-1/2" tongue and groove wood decking at the first floor, and two 1" layers of tongue and groove wood decking at the second floor. No finishes have been applied to the interior surfaces of the building: walls are unfinished brick, and ceilings are exposed joists and beams.

Today the structure contains a small boiler/steam heating system which is confined to the basement. The first and second floors were heated at one time, but the radiators have since been removed. Building No. 21 has also been fitted with a dry pipe sprinkler system.

#### D. Detailed Description of Site

Building No. 21 is situated at the southeastern edge of the Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District, directly adjacent to the Union Pacific

Railroad right-of-way. The linear siting of this structure is, undoubtedly, a direct response to the geometry imposed by the Railroad. In the "historic heart" of the Quartermaster Depot, Buildings 1, 3, 20, and 21 are laid out parallel to the Union Pacific tracks, while Building 18, at the site's highest point, is set at a 45° angle to the rest. Later buildings have not significantly affected the original siting geometry.

The seven-acre Depot site is situated to the south and west edges of Omaha's Central Business District. Light industrial uses border the Depot to the south and residential neighborhoods adjoin it to the north and west.

The gently sloping, irregularly shaped site has had extensive and well-maintained landscaping throughout its history. A row of Catalpa trees planted to the west of Building No. 1 in 1886 still exist today.<sup>20</sup> In 1938, the CCC (Civilian Construction Corps) stationed at the Quartermaster Depot substantially added to the landscaping, further enhancing the Depot's park-like feeling.<sup>21</sup>

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Due to the substantial damage inflicted by the fire of 13 February, 1982, Building No. 21 is scheduled for demolition in 1983. The building's site is to become a parking lot for military owned vehicles of the 561st U. S. Army Reserve Unit presently stationed there. Plans are also underway for total renovation/rehabilitation of the other buildings in the Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District (Buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 18 and 20). These will house the USAR units presently stationed there.

As per the Memorandum of Agreement dated 10 July, 1982, and ratified by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Corps of Engineers, and the Nebraska State Historical Society Preservation Officer, this documentation of Building No. 21 fulfills Item #1 of said Memorandum.

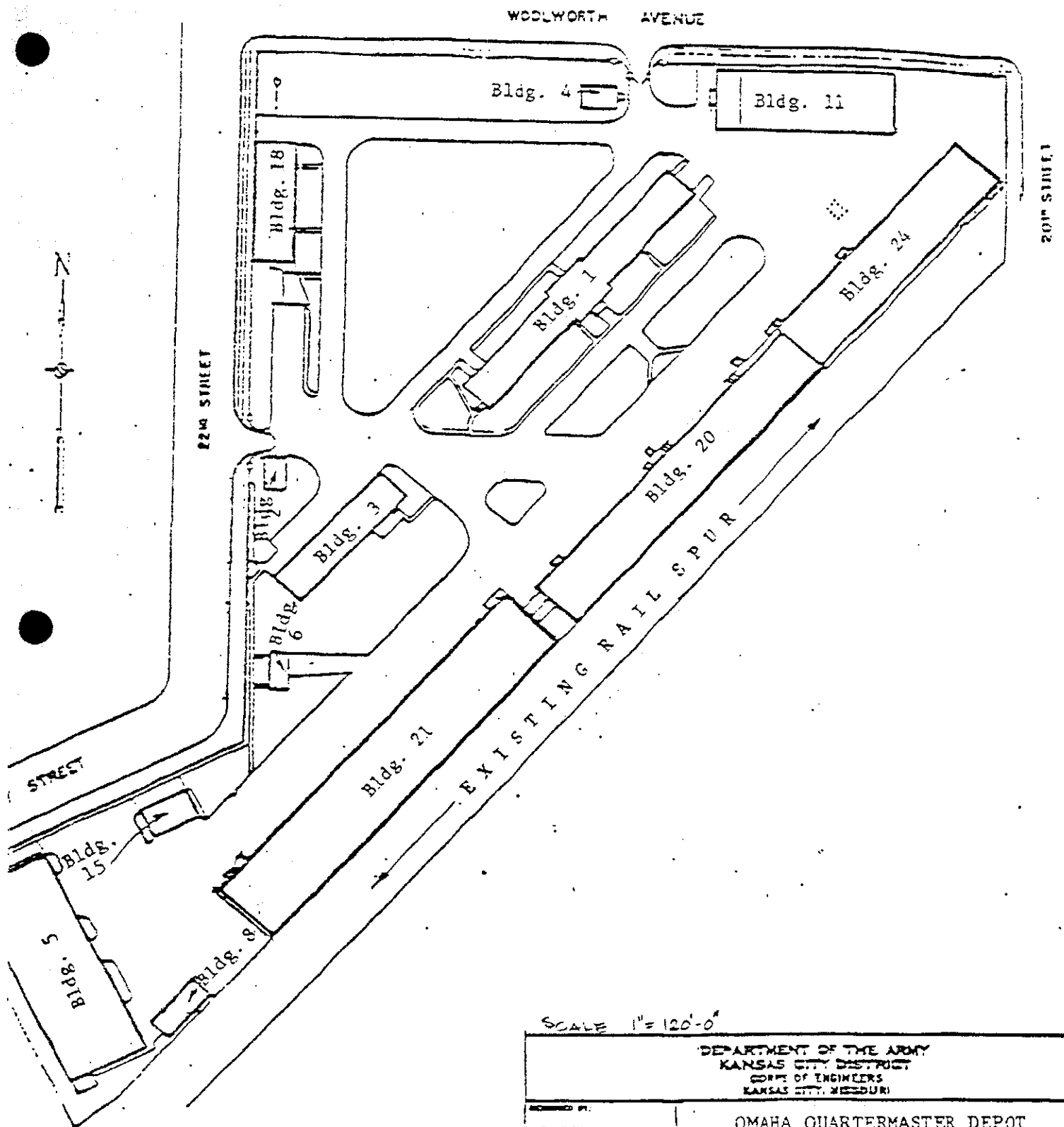
This historical documentation of Building No. 21 was prepared by Dan M. Worth of Bahr Vermeer & Haecker, Architects, Ltd., Omaha, Nebraska, in February of 1982. This record conforms to the Standards of the National Architectural and Engineering Record, U. S. Department of the Interior.

END NOTES

- 1 Gary Bower, William Ryan, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Omaha Quartermaster Depot Historic District, Douglas County, Nebraska" (Omaha: Bahr Vermeer & Haecker, Architects, Ltd., September, 1978).
- 2 PFC David Lavish, "The Old Corral's Part in the Expanding of the West", XVI Corps Compass, 1966, hereinafter referred to as Lavish.
- 3 Omaha Bee, 1 January, 1906.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, A Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation in Omaha (Omaha: Klopp Printing Company, 1980), p. 82.
- 6 Omaha World Herald, 27 July, 1912.
- 7 Book #30, Deeds and Mortgage Records, Douglas County, Nebraska, pp. 162-163.
- 8 "Historic Omaha Corral to Go", Omaha World Herald, 11 September, 1932.
- 9 Maj. Stuart C. Lynn, "The Old Corral Lives On", Unpublished Manuscript, 1978, pp. 2-3., hereinafter referred to as Lynn.
- 10 Cpt. John M. Furey, Depot Quartermaster, "Annual Inspection Reports", 1882 and 1883.

- 11 Lynn, pp. 3-4.
- 12 Lavish.
- 13 Conversation with Mr. Robert B. Matchette, Researcher, Old Army and Navy Branch, Military Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. on 16 March 1983. (General correspondence files concerning Building No. 21 are contained in Record Group 92, Records of the Quartermaster General, at this office.)
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Lynn, p. 7.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- 17 Lavish.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Lynn, p. 4.
- 21 Lavish.

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SCALE 1"=120'-0"

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY KANSAS CITY DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI	
DESIGNED BY: DRAWN BY: CHECKED BY: SUBMITTED: APPROVED:	OMAHA QUARTERMASTER DEPOT HISTORIC DISTRICT U.S. ARMY RESERVE CENTER OMAHA, NEBRASKA  EXISTING SITE PLAN
SEAL	

OMAHA QUARTERMASTER DEPOT  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
U.S. ARMY RESERVE CENTER  
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

